
THE
COURT-SECRET:

A

Melancholy Truth.

THE
COURT-SECRET;

A

Melancholy Truth.

Now first translated from the Original
Arabic.

By an Adept in the Oriental Tongues.

Remember that a Prince's Secrets are Balm concealed; but Poison if discovered.

MASSINGER.

D U B L I N :

Printed for and sold by JAMES KELBURN, at
the *Three Golden Balls* in *George's-Lane*, over-
against the *Castle-Market*.

M DCC XLII.



INTRODUCTION

TO THE

READER.

FRIEND,

IF thou art not one of those, who think that none but odd Fellows pore over Oriental Manuscripts; and that the Matter contained in the said Manuscripts, is, to the full, as odd as those who study it, thou wilt not, perhaps, be displeased with the following Fragment; which was transmitted to me from *France*, as a Curiosity, by a Member of the Academy Royal.

Thou must, however, accept the Translation on the same Terms that I did the Original, which is in *Arabic*; that is to say, without a Key to the Characters or Facts it treats of; History not affording us the least Assistance to guess at either: It begins abruptly, after the following Manner.

—— The Hog of *Noah* was not more sensual, *Eve's* Peacock more gaudy, or *Salomon's* Horse more proud ; no Fox was more subtle, no Wolf more voracious, no Dog more fawning, no Hare more timorous, and no Cat more desperate: To say then that God had given the Sultan into such Hands, was to say, that he had, in a Manner, forsaken him, and that the very Deed-jeal himself had already marked him out for his Prey.

The principal Point this Monster of a *Vizier* had in view, was to perpetuate his ill-got Power ; and the Means he used for that End, was to enfeeble and oppress the People, whom he feared, and cajole his Master, whom he despised ; in both which wicked Projects he was but too successful.

The Power and Authority he was possessed of, soon enabled him to compass the first ; but more Time and Address were requisite for the last. The Nations under his Rod found themselves divided into two Tribes, Asses and Drivers: And, not having been used to the Whip or the Load, not only complained of the Impositions they felt, but struggled hard to remove them.

There was yet about the Sultan one Man, of the Race of *Ali Ebn Azra*, who scorned the *Vizier*, as much as he loved his Sovereign, who seemed to be left as an Example to the Great, of all the Virtues they ought to imitate ; fond of Fame, but more of Virtue ; loyal, but not for Reward ; free in the Delivery of Truth, but gentle

tle in the Manner; modest in defending himself, resolute in the Defence of others; not void of human Frailties, but not too proud to acknowledge them; incapable of Flattery, though to oblige the Woman he loved, or temporize with the Prince he revered; of such exemplary Honour, that no Consideration, though of Life itself, was of any Weight in the Scale against it. In a Word, he was in all Things the Reverse of the Vizier; and therefore, till he was undone, the Vizier never thought himself safe.

Nor was this Apprehension of his without Foundation; for when he had left the Sultan, self-satisfied as a God, believing all his Affairs to be in the most flourishing State, his Government established, his People happy, his Enemies submissive, and his Glory at the full; the plain-dealing *Achmet*, from Time to Time broke the Bubble, with a single Blast, and manifested to him, that when the Waters were covered with the most Froth, they were ever most troubled.

To rid the Court of this dangerous Nufance, and render it all of a Piece, was now become the Vizier's favourite Point; and, in order thereto, many a pathetic Remonstrance, many a warm Complaint, and many an insidious Pretence did he urge to the Sultan; but so clear was *Achmet's* Innocence, so acknowledged his Virtue, that all the Traitor's Artifices recoiled upon himself, and he half trembled for fear what he had projected for the Ruin of his Enemy, should hasten his own.

It

It happened, at length, that certain of the Sultan's Allies, taking Advantage of the Weakness and Wickedness of his corrupt Vizier's Administration, invaded his Frontiers, plundered his Towns, and led his Subjects into Captivity: Provoked with which Indignities, all the Nations under his Command, as with one Voice, importuned the Prince for Vengeance, and to be led forth in Arms, against the Enemy. But so unwilling was the Vizier to part with any of the public Treasure, for any noble Purpose; so conscious of his Inability to conduct a War; and so fearful that new Demands on the People would occasion an Enquiry into the Application of the incredible Sums he had already squandered, that he artfully staved off the Rupture for several Years; meanly soliciting the Mercy of the Enemy on one Hand, and artfully promising his Fellow-subjects Redress on the other.

But, notwithstanding his fair Promises, no Symptom of any such Thing appearing, and the Tempers of the People, by a long Series of Injuries, being worked up to a dangerous Ferment, *Achmet*, as usual, took Advantage of the Crisis, to lay the whole Truth before the Sultan, who, astonished to find that his Subjects had so deeply suffered, that his own Honour had so long been at stake, and that so little Dependance was to be placed on the trifling Negotiations of his Vizier, not only resolved that very Instant to declare War, but offered to nominate to the chief Command whatever General his faithful *Achmet* thought proper to recommend.

Achmet

Achmet did not fail to improve the Opportunity; and having paused a few Minutes, Lord of my Life, said he, there is a Soldier, long since laid aside by the Vizier, for speaking as a Soldier should, Truth, and denied the Preferments due to his Valour and Virtue; I mean *Osmyn*, the *Aga*. There never yet was Danger which he durst not face, nor Fraud that he would not detect, nor Vice that he would not oppose: His Sword is his Advocate; his Services bear witness of his Worth, and the Records of our Scribes will be his Memorial. He, were I worthy to advise, should go forth as thy Shadow, to chastise Licentiousness, restore Discipline, awake Valour, atchieve Glory, and reward Desert. Thy Slaves will find him now in the Field, toiling with his own victorious Hands; thoughtless of Ambition, but disposed to receive thy sublime Behests, with a Veneration next to that he offers up to Heaven.

Be it so, replied the Sultan. He is my Elect! Let him know, I commit both my Glory and my Vengeance to his Charge. But lay thy Hand on thy Mouth, *Achmet*, This Resolution I challenge as my own, nor will I permit my Vizier to oppose it: As, therefore, thou regardest thy own Honour, or my Friendship, keep the Secret inviolably.

This *Achmet* did not fail to promise with the utmost Eagerness, and withdrew transported with his Commission; tho' not so much because it was a Proof of his Credit and Power with his Lord, as that the brave *Osmyn* would, at last, find himself

self in a Capacity to employ his great Abilities to avenge the Insults so long offered to his Country.

It was one of the standing Artifices of the Vizier, to surround his Master with his Spies; in which he was so successful, that the Sultan had no Retirement so secret, but his Intelligence found him out; nor was any Corner of his Seraglio so sacred, but his Emissaries had Means to make themselves acquainted with all that was transacted there; he had even bribed the reigning *Sultana* into his Interest, and furnished her with Instructions, which she was often to practise, in the very Moment when Love and Fondness rendered her Influence most irresistible.

'Tis no Wonder, therefore, that he was instantly informed of the Cabinet-Conference between the Sultan and *Achmet*; or of the apparent Satisfaction which was visible in the Eyes of the last, when he took his Leave: But tho' he received Intimation of the Conference, he remained in total Ignorance, as to the Subject-matter on which it turned: Not a Whisper had been heard, not a Syllable had been dropped, not a Hint had escaped; all was dark and impenetrable as Midnight; and as the Guilty are ever in Terror, the Vizier was like one of the Damned, till he had discovered the Secret: In which, nevertheless, he met with almost insurmountable Difficulties, since the *Sultana* herself was not only left in the dark; but when she tried her usual Arts, Flatteries, Sullennesses, Fears, Faintings, to worm out the Truth, had the Mortification to meet with nothing but downright Refusals, attended with Frowns and Rebukes.

A Prince

A Prince is to his Court, what the Sun is to the Firmament: If he shines, every Object is gilded: If clouded, all is gloomy. The Resentment of the *Sultan*, the Vexation of his Favourite, and the Apprehensions of his *Vizier*, had given an Air of Distraction to almost every Face, nor could the dullest Observer be long at a loss to guess the Cause.

There was then at Court a young Man named *Ibrahim*, who had endeared himself to the *Vizier*, by manifesting a Genius for Intrigue, scarce inferior to his own; and who had besides made it appear, that he was Body and Soul at his Devotion. To him did the Miserable *Vizier* pour forth his Discontent, rather to unbosom, than with any Hope of having it removed; and was therefore astonished to hear him, on the contrary, undertake, without the least Hesitation, to surmount all Obstacles, and procure him speedy Relief at the Peril of his Head. My Lord, said he, I am but just returned from visiting *Fatima*, the illustrious Widow of *Kara Ebn Ishmael*; she Loves *Achmet*, and is tenderly beloved by him: As Chance made him acquainted with her Beauties in the Life of her late Lord, she has permitted him to see her unveiled ever since his Death: Beside, their Nuptials being near at hand, she makes no secret of her Passion for him; and as *Achmet* since this secret Conference with the *Sultan*, has sent Letters and Excuses, when he was expected in Person, she has expressed her Chagrin for the Disappointment openly: An Incident of this Nature happened while I was present, and I could easily perceive, that her Resentment was not without some mixture of the Wormwood of Jealousy: From which slight Hint,

Hint, my Lord, expect to have all your Wishes answered.

Ibrahim then took his leave of the *Vizier*, and returned to *Fatima*, whom he found dispatching a Billet to *Achmet*, to insist on his immediate Presence, in order to clear up his late unprecedented Behaviour. If, said he entering, fair Lady, your Thoughts are upon your absent Lover; or you are disposed to command his Attendance, your Messenger must be dispatched to the House of *Osmyn* the *Aga*. The Hours he should enjoy with you, he wastes there; I saw him this Moment slip in at the Postern, as one who cared not to be discovered; and though it is probable his Visits may be innocent, it is possible they may be otherwise. If the Family of *Osmyn* are above Solicitation; or if the Remembrance of your superior Attractions secures him from any lasting Infidelity, it is possible he may, for a moment, forget himself in the Arms of some bewitching Slave, whom he may intend to part with; as cheaply as he won.—I say, it is possible, that even *Achmet*, for a Moment, may be thus seduced, and it is necessary you should be delivered from the Suspicion: Oblige him then to lay open the Secret of these mysterious Visits to the bottom——It is a Satisfaction you may demand of him, and which he cannot refuse.

Fatima lent a greedy Ear to this Advice, it favoured the Passion that was then uppermost in her Heart, and which she was resolved, at all Hazards, should be indulged. Glad, therefore, that she had received some Intelligence on which to ground her Suspicions, she waited with ungovernable Impatience for the Arrival of *Achmet*, which was almost

most the Moment *Ibrahim* took his Leave; and they were no sooner alone, but she opened her whole Heart, and that in the imperious Stile of provoked Beauty, conscious it may command, and resolute to be obeyed.

Achmet was thunderstruck with this unexpected Tryal; but nevertheless, defended himself like a Man of Sense, Spirit, and Honour: First by witty Evasions, Raillery, and Humour; then by general Assertions of his Innocence, and the most ardent Expressions of unfeigned Affection, and unalterable Fidelity: But all this proving but Oil to the Fire, and *Fatima* still insisting peremptory on being satisfied to the minutest Point, he then urged, that what she was so curious to know was a State-Secret communicated under the Seal of the Cabinet; remonstrated the *Sultan's* particular Command, and that his own Honour was pledged for his Obedience and Integrity.—And what says she, my Lord, do I deserve to be made your Wife, and not to be trusted with what every Court-Spy will be Master of to-morrow, as well as you?—No, no, this is a poor thin Pretence to evade the Truth, and put a Stop to my Enquiries. But I am not so easily deceived; and either resolve to comply, or to see me no more. At these Words she rose hastily from off the *Sofa*, and made toward the Door with such an Air, as left no room to doubt she was in earnest —This was a sight the infatuated *Achmet* could not bear: He followed her with Precipitation, hung upon her Robe, forced her back to the *Sofa*, gazed upon her for some Minutes in profound Silence; during which time his Heart was torn with Agonies inexpressible. At last Love gained the Ascendancy, and *Fatima's* Triumph was complete. *Ach-*

met poured the fatal Secret into the Bosom of his Beloved ; made a Merit of the Confidence he had placed in her ; and only conjured her not to forget that he had entrusted her both with his Life and Honour. *Fatima*, on the other hand, was so overjoyed with her Conquest, that she tasted almost as much Pleasure from her Pride as her Love ; and became so liberal of her Acknowledgments, that *Achmet* had scarce Power to perceive his own Weakness, or regret his Infidelity.

In this Temper on each side they parted, and the next Morning, *Ibrahim*, who was impatient to know the Success of his Artifice, paid another Visit to *Fatima*, who received him with that peculiar Air of Satisfaction, which breaks out involuntarily, when the Bosom fires Us with pleasing Passions, which it pants to communicate. *Ibrahim* instantly perceived it, and did not fail to bleed her in the right Vein. It was not enough that she had carried her Point, and subdued the Virtue of so considerable a Man as *Achmet* ; the Glory of it was still behind, and *Ibrahim*, she persuaded herself, for his past Information, had a Sort of right to participate in the Success. He needed only then to open the Channel, and the Stream followed : The dreaded, coveted, mischievous Secret could now be contained no longer, and it was hard to determine, whether the Hearer or Relater enjoyed it most.

Ibrahim having now carried his darling Point, made his Visit as short as possible, and posted to the *Vizier*, who gave him Instant Audience, devoured his News, and witnessed such a malignant Joy on that Occasion, as it may be supposed the *Dedjeal* feels on a Survey of the Damned : *Ibrahim*,

him, said he, thou hast made me happy: I shall now triumph over this Fellow and his Virtue: The Empire will henceforward be wholly at my Mercy, and thou shalt command thy own Reward.

He then made the best of his way to the Seraglio, and being admitted to the *Sultan*; May the Days of my Lord, said he, endure as long as the Sun, and may, his Glory be eternal. Here are the Seals of thy sublime Authority, with the Custody of which thou hast so long honoured thy faithful Slave. Permit me now to resign them at thy Footstool, and let the short Residue of my Life, worn out in thy Service, be spent in Prayers for thy perpetual Felicity. Thou hast thought proper to withdraw thy Confidence from me, withdraw also thy Power! *Achmet* has thy Heart, let him also wield thy Scepter——But let me beseech thy sublime Highness not to trust him too far. The Secrets of thy Empire are too mighty for him; even the Intentions of thy Goodness in favour of *Osmin* the *Aga* have already escaped him; they are become the Talk of the Soldiery, and the very Merchants canvass the Consequences over their *Kopha*. I speak this from a Heart full of Zeal for thy Service, not in Envy of *Achmet's* destined Greatness.—All this while the *Sultan* discovered the highest Astonishment, mixed with Concern and Indignation, and when the *Vizier* had ended, remained for a while in a profound Silence; after which, like one, who, from a State of Perplexity, had brought his Reflections to an Issue; withdraw, *Behemoth*, said he to the *Vizier*, before the Sun sets thou shalt know my Pleasure. The *Vizier* with a profound Reverence obeyed, and the *Sultan* immediately dispatched one of his Pages to

order *Achmet* to come into his Presence that Moment.

Achmet was then at the Feet of his charming Widow, dissolved in Raptures, for her having, in Acknowledgment of his late Sacrifice consented that the Morrow should be their Wedding Day : But on receiving the Sultan's Command, took, as he thought, a short Farewel, and hastened to obey it.

Being come to the Seraglio, he found the Sultan alone, who thus signified his Pleasure. *Behemoth* is thy Enemy, *Achmet* ; I, therefore, am not prone to give him Credit, when he brings Complaints against thee ; nor could prevail on my self to condemn thee without a hearing. I asked thy Advice preferable to his, and followed it ; but enjoined thee not to let the Secret escape thee : He says thou hast ; and adds such Particulars as would stagger any Man less attached to thee than I. Is it true ? I will be determined by thy own Voice ; for I am still confident thou canst not lie. *Achmet*, covered with Confusion, continued silent.— My Friend continues the Sultan, do not give me the Pain of doubting a Moment.— O *Fatima*, cries out the unfortunate *Achmet*, and fainted away. But soon recovering himself, and being out of Countenance, at his want of Firmness when he needed it so much, recollected all that was brave about him, and then went on : Lord of my Life, I will not pretend to extenuate, what can neither be conceal'd nor excused. I have trusted a Woman with my Honour, who, it appears, had none of her own. The Secret is out, and I am undone.—

undone.—— Another Pause of Silence ensued
 —— The Sultan looked to be the Image of Sor-
 row, and *Achmet* of Despair.—— At last the
 Sultan closed the Scene with these Words: “ *Ach-*
 “ *met*, I am not only sorry for thee but the whole
 “ Kind ; since thou hast deceived me, I have lost
 “ all Confidence, and from henceforward will
 “ be governed by Interest always, by Inclination
 “ never. The *Aga Osmyn* I will, however em-
 “ ploy on thy Recommendation ; since, I am well
 “ persuaded, his Virtue deserved it ; nor will I
 “ ever shock him with the Remembrance of thy
 “ Indiscretion.—— Adieu, *Achmet*, we have
 “ each of us lost a Friend which neither can ever
 “ regain.” At these Words the Monarch rose
 and *Achmet* having kissed the Hem of his Robe,
 left his Presence, in a Situation of Mind, to be
 imagined, perhaps, but not to be described.

When he found himself at Home, he threw
 himself on the first Sofa he met with, stunned
 with the Misfortune that had befallen him, and, for
 the present incapable of Reflection ; his Servants
 spread the Table, and he sat down to it as usual,
 but with the Mien of one who slept with his Eyes
 open ; in the Possession, but without the Use of
 his Senses. In this dreadful Manner he passed the
 rest of the Day, and when Night came on, it
 brought with it neither Comfort nor Repose.
 With the Dawn his intellectual Faculties returned:
 The Promise he had so long solicited, and which
 he had received with such Raptures from *Fatima*,
 rushed into his Mind, and rousing him from his
 Trance at once, displayed before his View a
 Scene

Scene of Wretchedness, that seemed to have neither Bound nor End. What was before his Paradise, was now become his Hell. Both *Fatima* and himself he considered as fallen Angels, that Grace could not reach, that Penitence could not save. He had forfeited his Honour; she had betrayed her Love. Not to think of her was Horror; to be wedded to her Madness; in his own Heart no resource of Comfort was left: It was an empty, useless Casket, from whence the Twin Jewels, Honour and Content were stolen.

Such was the deplorable Situation of the unfortunate *Achmet*; while *Fatima* on the other Hand had slept like the Favourites of Providence, in the very Arms of Tranquility, and saluted the Morning when she rose, as the Harbinger of Happiness; Love and *Achmet* took up all her Thoughts; she dressed, she laughed, she summoned her Friends to share in her good Fortune, she thought the Moments, instead of being winged, had leaden Feet, and wantonly chid them to make more haste away.

The appointed Hour at last arrived; the Circle was formed all bright, all beautiful: The Bride in the midst distinguished like the Morning-star, by superior Lustre. Nothing was now wanting but *Achmet*, and every hasty Footstep seemed to promise his Arrival.

But, behold, in his Stead, when Expectation was almost sick with longing, a Messenger enters, and who, having presented a Billet to *Fatima*, vanished in such haste, as seemed to indicate an Answer was no part of his Commission.

At this unexpected Incident, the Bride's Countenance fell at once, her Breast heaved, her Colour went and came, her Hand trembled, a cold Sweat stood upon her Brow; and, having with her Eye ran hastily over the fatal Letter, she gave a loud Screek, and fainted away.

The Gaiety of a Nuptial Scene was now wholly lost in a general Confusion; Part of the Bride's fair Friends received her in their Arms, and used their best Endeavours to recal her wandering Spirit. ~~_____~~ insatiable Curiosity, excited the Lines which had Power to effect so sudden and so sad a Change.

The LETTER.

Achmet to Fatima.

O *Fatima*!

THOU hast ruined the Man who adored thee. I trusted thee with my Honour, and thou hast betrayed it to my Enemy. Of Treachery, however, I do not accuse thee: But if Frailty implies Guilt, thou hast even more to answer for than I: For hadst not thou tempted, I had not fallen.—Thee I forgive; myself I cannot; and for fear I should, am resolved to look on the Eyes
of

of my undoer no more.—— Adieu, *Fatima!* before this is presented to thee, I shall be numbered with those that have been.

The Moment that this was read, the House rung with Lamentations, and Messengers were dispatched with full Speed, to prevent, if possible such a Catastrophe. Impossible, indeed, it proved. Dead they found him on his Sofa; with a Smile on his Countenance, as if to signify his Transgression was now attoned for.

On a Table near him lay ~~some papers~~
Letters, the Contents of which were as follow.

To the SULTAN.

THOU' I survived my Honour, I could not the just Resentment which followed the Loss of it. My Innocence was then my Glory, and, on the Strength of that, I one Day hoped to convince thee, how justly thy people complain of *Behemoth*; how deeply thou art injured by his infamous Administration, and from what disinterested Motives I opposed it.

But when his Artifices had prevailed against me, when I became answerable for this one Escape, I looked upon my self both as a useless and a culpable Being; and therefore chose to lay down Life as a Burthen, which every Day would have rendered more grievous than it had been the last.

If ever then thou shouldst do *Achmet* the Honour of a Remembrance, let it be, as of one who lived for thy Service, and when incapable of acting up to his Wishes, would live no longer : As of one who was devoted to thy Person, not thy Power ; and who in an Age of Prostitution, gave it no Countenance by his Example.

Tho' *Behemoth*, I know, will find Matter of Triumph in my Death, and, perhaps, endeavour to set a Mark of Infamy on my Grave, I neither thy Royal Protection from his Insults, nor Umbrage for my Memory : Posterity is impartial, and will do Justice to us both. But if ever I have found Favour in thy Sight, if ever I proved my self in Heart devoted to thee, beware thy self of his pernicious Counsels. It is the Advice that, living, I always gave thee : It is the Advice, that, dying, I bequeath thee. — He will, as usual, make a Merit of shielding thee from the ill Practices of thy Enemies ; but thou will one Day find, that no Enemy is half so much to be dreaded, as a false Friend. That thy Days may be long and happy, thy Reign glorious, thy End serene, and thy Memory revered, is the last Prayer of thy Slave

ACHMET.

To

TO BEHEMOTH.

Behemoth,

I Committed one Trespafs, and punished it with my own Hand (how happy had it been for thy Country, if thou hadst done the same by thine :) But hadst thou as many Lives as there are Moments in a Year, and were to forfeit *them all in Succession*, couldst thou say, with a safe Conscience, when laying down thy last, *My Sins are expiated?* As thou hast then but one Life to forfeit, thou wilt say, perhaps, alas, for Pity! That in this Case, Justice is Bankrupt, and cannot satisfy such an Infinity of Claims; and thou wilt say true. But if thou hast the least Particle of Honesty remaining, thou wilt offer a Composition, at least, and agree to pay as far as thou art able——History will then have one Instance to quote in thy Favour; and when thou shalt have thy final Audit, thou wilt have something to plead in Abatement of the heavy Punishment thou hast reason to expect, and canst not possibly avoid.

Thou hast never thought me thy Friend; but thy Flatterers never advised thee half so honestly; and tho' it has hitherto been my Glory, that we never yet trod in the same Path, it is now my earnest Request, that thou wouldst follow me. By the Time that thou receivest this Paper, I shall have put an End to an obnoxious Life. Accord-
ing

ing to the saying of the Prophet of the *Nazarines*,
go thy Way and do likewise.

So shall the Land have Rest as well as

ACHMET.

Here the Tale breaks of: And whether *Behemoth* followed the Example of *Achmet*, or *Architophel*; whether the Sultan learned to walk without ministerial Leading-strings; and whether *Fatima* broke her Heart for the Loss of her Lover, will remain Doubts perhaps, till the Judgment Day.

F I N I S.

Sultan - H. G. 2^d

Vizier - W. R. Walpole

Behemoth

Achmet - Earl of Scarborough

Ibrahim -

Fatima - Dutches of Ancaster

Handwritten text, likely a list or index, consisting of several lines of cursive script. The text is faint and difficult to decipher, but appears to be organized into a structured format, possibly a table or a list of entries. The handwriting is characteristic of the 18th or 19th century.

